

## Western Indian Gaming Conference Honors Two Indian Country Icons and Looks Toward Future



L-R: Damon Sandoval, CNIGA Vice Chairman and Morongo Band of Missions Indians Council Member; Leon Benner, CNIGA Eastern Representative and Redding Rancheria Councilperson; Dennis Hendricks, CNIGA Treasurer and Tuolumne Band of Miwok Indians Council Member; Jerry Levine, Partner at Holland & Knight; Marshall McKay, CNIGA and Yocha Dehe Wintun Nation Chairman Emeritus, Tribal Elder; Henry Murphy, CNIGA Southern Representative and Vice Chairman for Sycuan Band of the Kumeyaay Nation; and Steve Stallings, CNIGA Chairman and Rincon Band of Luiseno Indians Council Member.

Nestled in the valley floor of Cabazon, CA, more than 300 attendees gathered at the Morongo Casino, Resort & Spa for the 22nd annual Western Indian Gaming Conference (WIGC), presented by the California Nations Indian Gaming Association. The recently expanded two-day conference covered a myriad of topics including project financing, legislative and new food and beverage tracks.

Attendees gathered for the opening session where Association Chairman Steve Stallings gave the state of the industry report. Attendees were also there for the launch of CNIGA's new brand identity and website.

The general sessions provided an outlook of what the new Trump Administration means to Indian Country and recommendations on how tribes can get engaged. Panelist Eddie Tullis, member of the Poarch Creek Band encouraged tribal leaders not to ignore the Administration and to find ways to get involved in the policy making by applying for positions in the Administration. Scott Dacey, Partner at Pace Government Relations, provided an overview of the legislative landscape in Washington D.C. and what to expect from Congress while Scott Mason, from Holland and Knight provided insight from the Trump transition team. Attendees were warned that if a topic wasn't a campaign issue, it is not on the Presidents list of priorities and involvement with the Administration is critical.

This panel set the tone for the rest of the conference, where registrants were able to have in-depth discussions with the panelists and ask straightforward and difficult questions.



Mary Ann Andreas, Vice Chairwoman from Morongo Band of Mission Indians.

The general session also included an in depth look at recently negotiated tribal state compacts. Attorney's discussed some of the controversial provisions and how their clients have been able to work with them.

During lunch, CNIGA honored two icons of the California tribal gaming world – Jerry Levine, partner at Holland and Knight was honored for his 30-year career in Indian Country working to help establish and shape this industry; and Marshall McKay, Chairman Emeritus, Yocha Dehe Wintun Nation was honored for his leadership and vision to help his tribe along their path for self determination.

Over the next two days registrants had an opportunity to listen to industry experts and veterans, including presentations by Hard Rock International on how the Seminole tribe acquired and is using an international brand, a panel on competition and market saturation, as well as an exciting panel on how to tailor food and beverage options to the changing patron demographic.

CNIGA's WIGC has proven to be one of the most informative conferences in Indian Country. CNIGA appreciates the support of all of the tribal leaders, casino operations managers, regulators, policy makers and industry professionals from throughout the country who attended the conference and made it the most well attended conference in several years. ♣

For more information about the California Nations Indian Gaming Association, visit [www.cniga.com](http://www.cniga.com).